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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated a new secondary school teacher education program initiated in 1980 at Pennsylvania State University. Major differences between this program and the old program were: (1) an increase of three credit-hours in foundations and methods courses; (2) the addition of five credit-hours of field experiences; (3) an increase of two credit-hours in student teaching; (4) a decrease of five to seven credit-hours in content preparation; and (5) a decrease of two to seven credit-hours in electives. The major purpose of the study was to compare perceived needs and proficiencies of student teachers in the new program with those of student teachers in the old program. Thirty-four generic competencies were assessed and compared. There were 55 students in the old program and 31 students in the new program. Data were gathered by use of a questionnaire and were analyzed by use of t-tests and correlations. Findings indicated significant correlations for both groups for perceived needs and proficiencies. Although no significant differences were found between the two groups, university supervisors judged the competencies of new program students to have been demonstrated better than were those of students in the old program. Five tables containing study data are appended. (Author/JMK)

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An Analysis of the Perceived Needs and Proficiencies of Preservice Teachers for Program Evaluation

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Abstract

The study evaluated a new secondary teacher education program at a major university. The major purpose was to compare perceived needs and proficiencies of student teachers in the new program with student teachers in the old program. Thirty-four generic competencies were assessed and compared. There were fifty-five students in the old program and thirty-one students in the new program. Data were gathered by use of a questionnaire and were analyzed by use of t-tests and correlations. Findings indicated significant correlations (.05) for both groups for perceived needs and proficiencies. Although no significant differences were found between the two groups, university supervisors judged the competencies of the new program students to have been demonstrated better than those students in the old program.

Background

This study provided evaluation data on a new secondary education program initiated in 1980 at The Pennsylvania State University. The major differences between this new program and the old program are: (a) an increase of three credit-hours in foundations courses (12-15 crs.), (b) an increase of three credit-hours in methods courses (9-12 crs.), (c) the addition of five credit-hours of field experiences, (d) an increase of two credit-hours in student teaching (10-12 crs.), (e) a decrease of five to seven credit-hours in content preparation, and (f) a decrease of two to seven credit-hours in electives.

Based on research in the field (Hopkins, 1970; Sanders, 1972; Baer and Foster, 1974; Cranfill, 1979) the two recommendations given most frequently by preservice and inservice teachers for the improvement of teacher education are: (a) the addition of the field experience, and (b) the increase in credit-hours for student teaching. These recommendations are prominent in this new program along with the addition of five credit-hours of field experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to compare perceived needs and proficiencies of student teachers completing the new secondary education program (Group II) with a group of student teachers completing the old secondary teacher education program (Group I). Competencies assessed in the program were the twenty-two (22) generic competencies used by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in their yearly follow-up program of newly certificated secondary teachers (competencies #1-22 on the questionnaire) plus an additional twelve (12) generic competencies embedded in the university program. These thirty-four (34) generic competencies were identified by the college faculty (teacher trainers

in the program; n=10) as part of the new program.

Additional aspects of the study were: (a) to compare the proficiency perceptions of student teachers with their university supervisors' perceptions of the student teachers' proficiency; (b) to compare the proficiency perceptions of student teachers with their cooperating teachers' perceptions of the student teachers' proficiency; (c) to compare perceptions of need for the competencies by the student teachers with the perceptions of need for the competencies by the college faculty responsible for the program; (d) to make an assessment of the degree of preparation attained by student teachers regarding the 22 generic competencies used by the State Department of Education in their assessment program; and (e) a descriptive analysis of the rankings on need and proficiency data among Groups I and II, college faculty, university supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Selection of the Sample

All preservice secondary student teachers who completed their student teaching during the Winter and Spring Terms of 1980 were the representative sample (n=55) from the old secondary education program (Group I). All preservice secondary student teachers who completed their student teaching during the Winter and Spring Terms of 1981 (n=31), constituted the new teacher education program (Group II).

Date Collection and Analysis

The data were obtained by using a questionnaire (Table I) which was developed in the following manner. The 22 competencies appearing on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's First Year Teacher Survey questionnaire and the 27 professional education competencies for the revised secondary teacher preparation program at The Pennsylvania State University were combined into one set of thirty-six competencies. The criterion used in this process was to keep

the twenty-two competencies of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and to add any from The Pennsylvania State University program that were not covered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education list.

To obtain a measure of validity for this list of thirty-six competencies, it was given to the college faculty who were responsible for much of the work done in the new secondary program. They were asked to judge each competency as to whether the competency is being taught or will be taught in the new secondary education curriculum. A "yes" or "no" response was requested. Only those competencies receiving 70 percent or better inter-judge agreement were retained on the questionnaire. The results showed that two competencies had to be dropped, thereby reducing the list to thirty-four.

The student teacher respondents indicated perceived need, and perceived proficiency for each of the thirty-four competencies. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors indicated their evaluation of the student teachers' proficiency in each of the thirty-four competency areas. Additionally, the college faculty indicated their perceived need for each of the competencies.

Insert Table 1 About Here

The following comparisons and analyses were made with the 34 competency statements:

1. Correlations and t-tests between perceived need and perceived proficiency for Group I and Group II.

2. Correlations and t-tests for perceived proficiency between the university supervisors and Group I and Group II, and between the cooperating teachers and Group I and Group II.

3. Correlation of perceived need between college faculty and Group I and Group II.

4. Proficiency comparison between Groups I and II with the Pennsylvaria Department of Education's twenty-two (22) generic competencies.

5. Ranking of need between college faculty and Group I, college faculty and Group II, and Group I and Group II.

6. Ranking of perceived proficiency between Group I and Group II, cooperating teachers for Groups I and II, and university supervisors for Groups I and II.

All correlations were between the mears found for each of the 34 competency statements corresponding to the groups being compared. For example, the mean of all the responses for Group I to competency one was obtained; the mean of all the responses by Group I to competency two was obtained; and so on through competency 34. The Pearson-Product-Moment Correlation was utilized for all correlations.

Tests for significant differences between the groups of respondents regarding need and proficiency utilized the t-test for independent groups applied to the overall means. These overall mean values were obtained in the following manner. The total score pertaining to need for each student in Group I was obtained and the mean of these scores was calculated. Following the same procedure the means were calculated for Group I regarding proficiency; for Group II regarding need; and for Group II regarding proficiency.

Findings and Discussion

The following are some of the many findings:

1. Correlations (Table 2) between perceived needs and proficiencies for student teachers in Group I and Group II were significant for each group but not significantly different from each other. In both cases the students had higher need expectations for competencies than they did for perceptions of their proficiencies in those competencies.

Insert Table 2 About Here

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2. Correlations (Table 3) for proficiency between university supervisors and Groups I and II were significant but the difference in the two correlations was not significant. However, the difference favored the new program (Group II). Correlations (Table 3) for proficiency between cooperating teachers and Groups I and II were significant but the difference in the two correlations was not significant. However, there was evidence to indicate that the secondary student teachers in the old program and their cooperating teachers agreed more regarding the student teachers' proficiency in the competencies than did the secondary student teachers in the new program and their cooperating teachers. The directional difference in these two correlations can be explained by the higher ratings of student teachers in Group II by their cooperating teachers. In other words, by rating the Group II students higher than Group I students, the correlation was lowered.

Insert Table 3 About Here

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3. Correlations (Table 4) for need of competencies between faculty and Groups I and II were significant. The difference in correlations between Groups I and II was not significant. However, the higher correlation favored Group II indicating directionally a stronger agreement between the faculty and that group.

Insert Table 4 About Here

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4. Comparison of proficiency between Group I ($\bar{X}$ = 3.351) and Group II ($\bar{X}$ = 3.492) for the Pennsylvania Department of Education's twenty-two (22) generic competencies showed no significant difference between the two groups. However, the direction of difference favored Group II.

5. Table 5 presents the data for the 34 competency statements. The ranks were derived from using the mean "score" for the respective groups responding to each competency statement. The rankings permit a competency by competency comparison across the different groups. Some of the important comparisons are:

a. The table shows that the most needed competency (ranked first) was number 12 for the college faculty; number 2 for Group I and number 27 for Group II. Group I perceived their proficiency in competency 2 as between "adequate" and "more than adequate" with a ranking of 12. On the other hand, students in Group II perceived their proficiency in competency 27 as between "more than adequate" and "extensive" for a ranking of 2.

b. The greatest discrepancy in proficiency rankings occurred in competency number 3. This competency was ranked 21 by students in Group I and 8 by students in Group II. The competency addresses tests and measurement techniques for the classroom, and had not been part of the old program.

c. Competency 6 (NEED) was ranked 7.5 by the college faculty, 17 by students in Group I, and 22.5 by students in Group II. Although students in group II ranked the need for this competency the lowest of the three groups (faculty, Group I, Group II), they rated their proficiency in this competency the highest.

d. Competency 11 (NEED) was ranked 13.5 by the college faculty, 4.5 by students in Group I and 2 by students in Group II. Proficiency in this competency was judged higher by cooperating teachers and supervisors for

students in the new program. The students of the new program also perceived their proficiency to be higher than did the students of the old program.

e. Competency 24 (NEED) was ranked 7.5 by the college faculty, 17 by the students in Group I, and 11 by students in Group II. This competency had not been part of the old program. There is no difference in perceived proficiency between Group I and Group II, however, there is a difference in proficiency between old and new favoring the new program where proficiency is judged by university supervisors and cooperating teachers.

f. Competency 27 (NEED) was ranked 19.5 by the college faculty, 3 by students in Group I, and 1 by students in Group II. There is a clear discrepancy between faculty and students on need for this competency. Proficiency ratings by old and new program students and university supervisors and cooperating teachers ranged from "more than adequate" to "extensive."

g. For all 34 competencies the university supervisors gave higher proficiency ratings than did the cooperating teachers in both the old and new programs. This finding suggests a degree of discrepancy on beginning expectations between university supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Insert Table 5 About Here

Studies that seek feedback from student teachers in teacher education program evaluation are limited in number. Lukin (1977) reported a study done at Lehman College in which a questionnaire was circulated to 87 student teachers and their cooperating teachers. Among the results the student teachers and

cooperating teachers as well as student teachers and college supervisors were in general agreement with respect to rank order of importance and development of the competencies. The results of the present study tend to support Lukin in the development portion of these findings. Although this study suggests some discrepancies in rankings, the overall high correlations are supportive of Lukin's work. However, Purcell and Seiferth (1978) in a study of student teachers at Southern Illinois University--Carbondale reported that there was a consistent pattern of difficulty ratings to correlate negatively with preparation ratings. The results of this study do not support these findings.

Pigge (1878) said that practicing classroom teachers have indicated that teacher education institutions have been negligent in emphasizing to a sufficient extent the most needed classroom skills or competencies. Since classroom teachers helped establish the list of 34 generic competencies and the data indicate a "more than adequate" rating of proficiency in those competencies, the present study does not support what Pigge found.

Conclusions

Gage (1972) stated that no one knows what is actually taught in teacher education or whether what is taught aligns properly with teachers' needs. And according to Fuller and Bown (1975) teachers do not feel helped by teacher education. These observations are sufficient to convey the nature of criticism directed at teacher education programs and to provide the motivation to improve the system. Baer and Foster (1974) said that one measure of an undergraduate teacher education program is the perceptions of its graduates. A review of the literature reveals that there have been many follow-up studies of recent education graduates to determine what teaching competencies the respondents felt they needed in the performance of their job and which of these topics or competencies

were not adequately covered in their preservice preparation. Haberman (1974) reported on such a study out of the University of Wisconsin. He listed such items as methods of dealing with the emotionally disturbed, the use of media and instructional equipment in the classroom, and conferences with parents as necessary for teachers but not adequately taught in preparation programs. Similar studies were conducted at the University of Missouri-Columbia (Hopkins, 1970), Illinois State University (Baer and Foster, 1974), Lehman College (Frankel, 1974), and East Texas State University - Texarkana (Cranfill, 1978) and the results of each were remarkably similar to what Haberman reported.

However, the results of this study indicate that improvement is possible when feedback from recent graduates is inserted into the program. Data showed that the competencies perceived to be high need were rated between "adequate" and "more than adequate" in perceived proficiency by the students completing the program.

Additionally, the faculty and the secondary student teachers are obtaining a high degree of agreement regarding the need for the competencies; university supervisors and cooperating teachers rated the student teachers more proficient in the competencies than the student teachers rated themselves; and there was no significant difference in the perceived need for the competencies between student teachers in the old program and those in the new program.

Teacher education in this country can be improved and in fact must be improved without further delay. "Mediocrity" has been attached to our educational system by the Commission Report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and among its recommendations to improve the system was "to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession". This recommendation can be met in part by teacher education evaluations that continuously take the "pulse" of its graduates to determine the health of its programs.

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Table 1

Competency Expectations for Teacher Trainees

1. To use questions which will cause pupils to think critically.
2. To give clear, explicit directions to pupils.
3. To use standardized and self-made evaluation and data collection techniques as an integral part of the total learning experience.
4. To determine which pupils are having difficulty in reading for purposes of appropriate referral or adjusting instruction.
5. To relate school learning and experience to the pupil's non-school world.
6. To create classroom environments which support directed and non-directed learning.
7. To conduct classes which develop positive attitudes toward learning.
8. To recognize sex stereotypes in instructional methods and materials.
9. To use specific techniques for developing intergroup and cross-cultural understandings.
10. To use knowledge of a pupil's social and ethnic background to promote his/her healthy self concept.
11. To use a variety of motivation techniques appropriate to the pupils' development.
12. To use effectively a variety of teaching materials, media and instructional groupings appropriate to the instructional objectives.
13. To design learning experiences which will encourage students to use basic study and learning skills.
14. To use data about pupil progress and attitudes to modify one's classroom practices.
15. To identify pupil behavior which differs significantly from "normal" behavior for purposes of obtaining special assistance.
16. To identify a particular pupil's development for purposes of using appropriate vocabulary, objectives and subject matter.
17. To identify an individual pupil's personal and scholastic needs.
18. To identify ways the pupil's peer group influences him/her.
19. To identify the local, state, and federal agencies, agents and laws which directly or indirectly affect the quality of professional actions at the local level.
20. To recognize and respond appropriately to the interaction between one's personal values and those of professional colleagues and the community.
21. To determine the consistency of one's own educational practices with his/her professional convictions.
22. To use knowledge of group dynamics in the classroom.

Table 1

CONTINUED

23. To understand and explain the processes necessary for students to succeed in his/her content area.

24. To select and develop instructional materials based on current curricular materials on his/her content area.

25. To advance pupil's ability to handle communication, computation and problem-solving skills appropriate to his/her content area.

26. To evaluate new curricular materials and their effectiveness to his/her discipline for appropriate reading levels, for multi-cultural emphases, and for their compatability with a variety of teaching techniques.

27. To speak before groups.

28. To read and interpret professional materials.

29. To write in a logical and understandable style and in standard written English.

30. To comprehend and interpret a message after listening.

31. To do computation and problem solving.

32. To accept the ethical responsibility for self-improvement as a professional.

33. To cooperate in planning educational activities with any of the following groups: colleagues, administrators, supervisory personnel, students, parents, and the community at large.

34. To define the problems and advantages of teacher negotiations as they reflect emerging changes in the relationships between teachers, and administrative hierarchy, and the educational community.

Response Format

Need	Proficiency
1. Not applicable	1. Not proficient
2. Not needed	2. Limited
3. Little	3. Adequate
4. Moderate	4. More than adequate
5. Extensive	5. Extensive

Table 2

Correlations Between Perceived Need and Proficiency for Groups I and II

	Group I	Group II
Perceived Need and Proficiency	.703*	.701*

*p < .05

Table 3

Perceived Proficiency Correlations Between Groups I and II, and University Supervisors and Cooperating Teachers

	PROFICIENCY	
	U. Supervisors	C. Teachers
Group I	.816*	.848*
Group II	.841*	.732*

*p < .05

Table 4

Perceived Need Correlations Between Faculty and Group I and Group II

	Group I	Group II
Faculty	.699*	.783*

*p < .05

Table 5

Need and Proficiency Data for Student Teachers, University Faculty, Supervisors, and Cooperating Teachers

	Faculty		Group I				Group II				Supervisors				Coop			
Competency	RN	$\bar{X}$	RN	$\bar{X}$	RP	$\bar{X}$	RN	$\bar{X}$	RP	$\bar{X}$	RI	$\bar{X}$	RII	$\bar{X}$	RI	$\bar{X}$	RII	$\bar{X}$
1	7.5	4.73	8	4.56	24	3.30	9.5	4.58	28	3.35	19	3.96	23.5	4.00	22	3.70	23.5	3.83
2	2	4.93	1	4.80	12	3.76	4	4.74	9.5	3.80	11	4.12	13	4.16	17.5	3.83	18	3.96
3	17	4.46	26.5	3.90	21	3.41	17	4.29	8	3.87	19	3.96	13	4.16	13.5	3.89	7.5	4.16
4	23	4.3	23	4.03	32	2.92	31	3.93	30	3.29	28	3.65	29.5	3.83	32	3.49	33	3.58
5	15.5	4.53	12	4.36	19	3.54	7.5	4.61	25.5	3.38	16	4.03	26	3.96	31	3.52	31	3.64
6	7.5	4.73	17	4.25	24	3.30	22.5	4.22	18	3.54	9.5	4.14	11	4.19	15.5	3.85	13	4.03
7	3.5	4.86	7	4.63	20	3.52	7.5	4.61	21	3.48	9.5	4.14	19.5	4.09	8	4.07	20.5	3.87
8	31	3.93	34	3.14	28	3.21	33	3.48	28	3.35	30.5	3.49	29.5	3.83	21	3.74	75.5	4.00
9	31	3.93	32	3.4	33	2.90	32	3.74	32	3.06	29	3.52	31	3.74	30	3.56	29.5	3.71
10	19.5	4.40	29	3.69	31	3.01	27	4.09	31	3.22	32	3.43	32	3.67	33	3.47	20.5	3.87
11	13.5	4.60	4.5	4.70	16	3.65	2	4.77	13.5	3.67	19	3.96	13	4.16	12	3.90	11	4.09
12	1	5.0	9	4.54	6	3.94	6	4.67	6.5	3.90	7	4.16	10	4.22	5.5	4.09	5	4.19
13	23	4.3	13.5	4.34	17	3.58	15.5	4.32	18	3.54	12	4.10	9	4.29	11	3.94	7.5	4.16
14	11	4.6	24	3.98	22	3.38	19	4.25	23	3.45	22.5	3.74	19.5	4.09	24	3.67	29.5	3.71
15	26.5	4.2	25	3.92	26	3.29	22.5	4.22	23	3.45	27	3.67	19.5	4.09	20	3.76	23.5	3.83
16	11	4.6	28	3.87	29	3.16	22.5	4.22	20	3.51	25	3.70	26	3.96	25	3.65	23.5	3.83
17	19.5	4.4	13.5	4.34	18	3.56	22.5	4.22	18	3.54	25	3.70	19.5	4.09	26.5	3.61	27	3.74
18	23	4.3	19	4.2	14	3.70	25	4.19	11.5	3.77	22.5	3.74	19.5	4.09	28	3.60	19	3.93
19	34	3.4	33	3.23	34	2.36	34	3.41	34	2.35	34	2.90	34	3.22	34	3.18	34	3.22
20	31	3.93	22	4.05	13	3.74	30	4.00	11.5	3.77	17	3.98	26	3.96	8	4.07	15.5	4.00
21	26.5	4.2	11	4.41	9.5	3.80	13	4.41	6.5	3.90	7	4.16	15.5	4.12	17.5	3.83	7.5	4.16

21	26.5	4.2	11	4.41	9.5	3.80	13	4.41	6.5	3.90	7	4.16	15.5	4.12	17.5	3.83	7.5	4.16
22	28	4.13	20	4.16	27	3.25	19	4.25	28	3.35	21	3.83	15.5	4.12	23	3.69	27	3.74
23	3.5	4.86	10	4.47	15	3.67	12	4.45	15	3.64	7	4.16	5.5	4.35	15.5	3.85	23.5	3.83
24	7.5	4.73	17	4.25	8	3.83	11	4.54	9.5	3.80	14.5	4.05	7.5	4.32	10	3.98	4	4.22
25	13.5	4.6	17	4.25	9.5	3.80	19	4.25	23	3.45	14.5	4.05	19.5	4.09	19	3.81	15.5	4.00
26	29	4.06	30	3.61	24	3.30	26	4.16	25.5	3.38	30.5	3.49	28	3.93	29	3.58	32	3.61
27	19.5	4.4	3	4.72	2	4.41	1	4.96	2	4.32	4	4.27	7.5	4.32	8	4.07	11	4.09
28	25	4.26	21	4.12	7	3.92	28.5	4.03	16	3.61	25	3.70	23.5	4.00	13.5	3.89	15.5	4.00
29	5	4.8	2	4.74	1	4.45	4	4.74	3	4.22	2.5	4.41	5.5	4.35	3	4.30	1.5	4.38
30	11	4.6	6	4.65	4	4.34	4	4.74	4	4.16	2.5	4.41	4	4.41	1.5	4.34	1.5	4.38
31	19.5	4.4	26.5	3.90	3	4.36	15.5	4.32	1	4.38	13	4.07	3	4.45	5.5	4.09	7.5	4.16
32	7.5	4.73	4.5	4.70	5	4.07	9.5	4.58	5	4.00	1	4.49	2	4.54	1.5	4.34	3	4.35
33	15.5	4.53	15	4.32	11	3.78	14	4.38	13.5	3.67	5	4.21	1	4.64	4	4.18	11	4.09
34	33	3.86	31	3.56	30	3.09	28.5	4.03	33	2.87	33	3.10	33	3.38	26.5	3.61	27	3.74

RN = Rank (Need)

RP = Rank (Proficiency)

RI = Rank Group I (Proficiency)

RII= Rank Group II (Proficiency)

Scores for competencies were scored 1 (low) to 5 (high).